

## ABSTRACT

### Childhood Experiences as a Consequence of Parental Migration in Trinidad and Tobago

Mala Jokhan

This qualitative study describes childhood experiences due to parental migration through the eyes of persons who have actually lived such circumstances within the socio-cultural context of Trinidad and Tobago. From a childhood-centred focus, it uses a social constructivist interpretive framework and a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of sixteen purposefully-selected research subjects.

The data from the respondents suggest that the management of the social and emotional displacement experienced due to parental migration seems to be critical. The nature of the parent-child relationship before, during and after separation appears to be crucial in understanding how participants view their experiences. Insights on parent-child reunification in the home country indicate that this can occur either from failed serial migration or parents returning after seasonal employment overseas. The participants' views about their experiences are based heavily on their gender role socialization and evidence from the narratives suggests that the ways in which they cope with the separation are more therapeutic for them but usually their coping strategies are interpreted as being disruptive and dysfunctional. Feedback from the participants as regards their prospects to also migrate as parents appears to be a personal choice in that they are not socio-culturally expected to also migrate as parents.

The insights from this study contribute towards shaping a social phenomenological model which outlines the essence of childhood experiences as a consequence of parental migration. The model characterizes the childhood experiences of the participants and it has been developed through understanding the views of the participants themselves, using qualitative methods to pursue a sociological analysis. In closing, the study contributes research ideas for revisiting areas of Caribbean family and migration literature and makes recommendations for comprehensive policy-making and practice.

Keywords: Mala Jokhan; qualitative study; childhood experiences; parental migration; Trinidad and Tobago.